



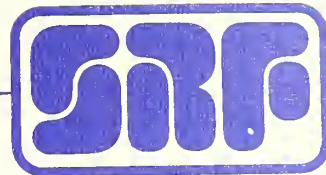
**Training Seminar  
for  
Blind Women Leaders in Africa  
held in  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
3-21 August, 1981  
Report**

Organised by the Swedish Federation of the Visually Handicapped (SRF) on behalf of the World Council of the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB) and the International Federation of the Blind (IFB), with financial support from the Swedish International Development Co-operation (SIDA). Local arrangements by the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind (ENAB).

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ek/sr

1981-12-28

Dear Madam/Sir,

Training Seminar for Blind Women Leaders

This very first Training Seminar for Blind Women Leaders in Africa has been a significant milestone in the work among the blind in the region. Being held during the International Year of Disabled Persons it further emphasises the importance of preparing blind women as well as men in Africa to take their rightful place in society.


Blind women in Africa have many things in common but there is a great danger in regarding them as a homogeneous group for which there are ready made solutions to their problems. The blind women themselves are capable of finding answers if they are encouraged to do so.

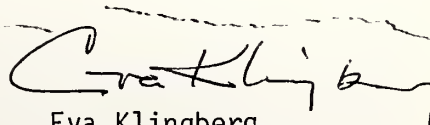
This seminar obviously encouraged the participants to return home and spread the knowledge they have acquired and establish women's committees within their own organisation.

In a women's committee women will be able to find out their needs and how to solve them. Besides, becoming a pressure group it is the hope of the participants that their knowledge will be utilized as a resource for officials in the development planning of the whole society.

Yours sincerely,

SWEDISH FEDERATION OF THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

  
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Report

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## Acknowledgements

The Training Seminar for Blind Women Leaders in Africa, the very first of its kind in Africa, was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, between 3 and 21 August, 1981.

For the seminar to come to realization the Swedish Federation of the Visually Handicapped has been dependent on the assistance and cooperation of many organisation and individuals.

We are most grateful to the Government of Ethiopia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs which gave approval to this seminar to be held in Ethiopia. Especially we wish to thank the Honorable Minister of Labour and Social Affairs for having the kindness of inaugurating the seminar.

We would like to express our gratitude for the support from the staff of the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind ENAB, especially its Local Arrangements Committee, which was responsible for many of the practical arrangements before and during the seminar.

We appreciate the facilities of Sebeta School for the Blind being made available and we would like to thank the staff of the school, the volunteers that assisted us and the personnel at Sebeta Hotel who provided the meals.

Our thanks also goes to the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) which sponsored the seminar, and to the Development Cooperation Office of the Swedish Embassy in Addis Ababa for giving us substantial support.

A great deal of effort, expertise and expenditure have been put into the programme to ensure that the Seminar met its aims and objectives. SRF would like to convey its sincere thanks to the agencies, organisations and individuals which in one way or another have contributed to the successful outcome of the seminar

Bengt Lindqvist  
President  
Swedish Federation  
of the Visually  
Handicapped



*All the participants from the Training Seminar for Blind Women Leaders in Africa at the compound of Sebeta School for the Blind.*



# **General background**

## **Women in developing countries**

Traditionally men and women were regarded as equal partners – working side by side – not competing but complementing each other. Their roles were clearly defined. Along with the rapidly changing society in the developing countries their roles have altered and very often to women's disadvantage. To some extent the subsistence agriculture is being shifted to cash crops, regarded as men's crops, which has limited the role and influence of women. Women are not taking part in the introduction of the new agricultural technology, partly due to lack of education. Instead, the machines are taking over the traditional female jobs. Therefore, women need education to be attractive on the labour market. To meet these new needs, programmes have been set up particularly centered on education and employment. In addition health programmes have been launched especially in rural areas in order to improve living conditions.

United Nations' agencies and Governments in cooperation with non-governmental organisations are trying to find specific solutions to these problems, but it seems that often knowledge and financial means are insufficient. The elimination of malnutrition, ill-health, unwanted pregnancies, illiteracy and unemployment will not be adequate. The greatest obstacles are cultural and psychological. Women have low status and low self-esteem and they need each other to analyse their culture and the circumstances in which they live. Priority must be given to actions which will help reduce women's lack of trust in their own capacity to take part in political and public life. Through self-awareness comes self-confidence, and self-confidence will increase their capacity to influence society and change their lives by organised action.

## **United Nation's Convention**

Since the last Century popular movements have been formed in many countries. People have found it an efficient method to improve their unsatisfactory situation. However, women's organisations have been met with reluctance, probably because their actions often have been interpreted as challenging men and their privileges. Still, women's counsel and experience are generally

unsought and unwanted in decision-making. This alienates women, besides causing the basis for decisions to be more narrow. Now, the time has come to correct this and to recognize women as equal partners in the development process. Women all over the world have to find more efficient channels to exert influence politically, socially and economically.

Through the United Nations' proclamation, it has now been acknowledged that it is a world-wide responsibility to recognize the potential contribution that women can offer. Discriminatory factors based on law and customs have limited women's possibilities for self-improvement and self-expression.

The United Nations' adoption of the "Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" in 1979, establishes, in legally binding form, internationally accepted principles and measures to achieve equal rights for women everywhere. It calls for national legislation to ban discrimination. It requires equal rights in political and public life, equal access to education and employment, equal pay, equal responsibilities in family life and rights to non-discriminatory health services for all women. The Convention sets up a machinery for the international supervision of the obligations accepted by the Member States.

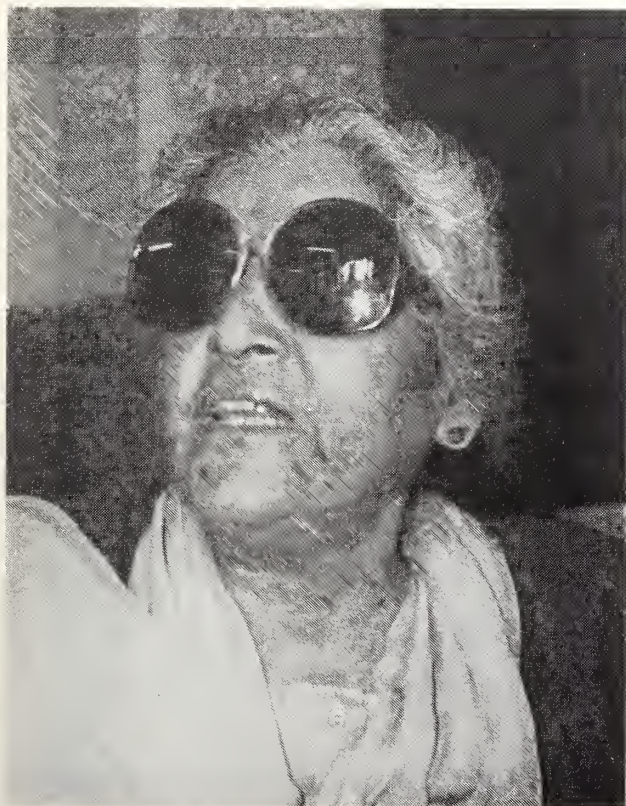
## **The blind woman**

What has been said here about women in general is also relevant to blind women, although their situation is even more severe. According to statistics assembled by the World Health Organisation (WHO) there are 30–40 million blind persons in the world. In addition to these there are millions of partially sighted. Three out of four of these live in developing countries. Malnutrition and lack of medical assistance are major causes of blindness. Lack of education and job opportunities make blind people belong to one of the poorest groups in society. To be a woman and at the same time be blind means having a very low status. A blind woman is seldom given access to education and employment. Prejudice from society and her own family is reflected in the blind woman's negative attitude towards herself. This prevents her from acquiring the most fundamental knowledge of how to run a household, bring up children etc. Having a blind child often means a heavy burden on the family. The blind woman is often overprotected and therefore prevented from earning her own living.



It is a problem of vital importance that parents and relatives of a disabled child are often not mentally prepared to recognize the visual impairment in a correct sense. This prevents them from stimulating the child to develop in a positive way. The parents often keep the disabled child behind curtains or, the opposite, send it out in the streets begging. Many poor families can have made themselves fully dependent on the blind child's income and cannot afford to accept the offer of sending the child to a boarding school for free. This attitude affects the girl's development and personality in different ways depending on when she lost her sight. As an infant she is often deprived of stimulation that could lessen her difficulties that arise when a blind child goes through the normal stages of development. Subconsciously she assumes the superstitious belief that she carries a sin from an earlier life and she plays the expected role – not to be seen, or heard.

Becoming blind when growing up can cause a backlash in the family's position in society. Ignorance causes reluctance to let a man marry her. She is deprived of getting the natural role of a mother and wife. The status of a house-wife often infers recognition of the capability of taking a more responsible role in political and social life. But, in those families where the blind daughter is trained like the other daughters in daily routine work, parents have created a well equipped and independent young lady, who may succeed



*Dr Fatima Shah, seminar instructor from Pakistan, shared her experiences in organisational work with the participants.*



both in her occupation and in her household. A blind girl, who gets proper training in the sighted world, will also cope well with her sighted friends. Lack of social experience and training creates embarrassing situations both for the blind and the sighted persons. In terms of good manners the rest of society will never give in and excuse the blind for being poorly informed. So far, little has been done in this field but now the claim is raised among the blind themselves in order to reach "Full Participation and Equality".

Unnecessarily, on top of the visual impairment, she easily becomes socially oppressed. Social disability – not being able – is caused by isolation and exclusion from participation in society.

To summarize, there are several reasons why many women do not dare to take their rightful place in life. Instead, they remain in despair, dominated by a sense of inferiority, loneliness, insecurity and frustration. On the other hand, those women who have overcome many obstacles should not be regarded as exceptions but rather as a striking proof of what can be achieved by most women if they are given the opportunity, support and encouragement from the very beginning when the girl/woman has become blind.

*The Ghanaian representative, Miss Grace Preko, was well informed about rural rehabilitation of blind women in Ghana.*



## **A conference on the situation of blind women**

The first conference on the situation of blind women was arranged in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1975 – the International Women's Year – where participants from the whole world were present. Lectures and discussions were held on the situation of blind women in the family and in society. Other subjects covered education, rehabilitation and employment. Resolutions were taken regarding the improvement of the situation of blind women (see Appendix C).

## **The initiative for Training Seminars for Blind Women**

During the two General Assemblies of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB) and the International Federation of the Blind (IFB) in Antwerp, in 1979, a small working group was formed to outline three regional training seminars for blind women in Africa, Asia and Latin America to be held during the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) 1981. A resolution was taken at WCWB's General Assembly urging WCWB to "promote in consultation with IFB, all attainable means of international contacts between blind women including regional meetings and seminars with practical objectives".

The Swedish Federation of the Visually Handicapped (SRF) declared its willingness to organise two training seminars for blind women.

Voluntary organisations are, in many countries, responsible for most of the activities for the blind. While the organisations have found it most urgent to rehabilitate and help blind men become able to support their families, very little has been done for blind women. SRF is an association promoting the interests of the blind in Sweden. For several decades it has also worked for the improvement of the situation of the blind in some of the developing countries. SRF found the objectives of the proposed seminar well in accordance with its ideas of self-help projects and agreed to assume the task of organising the seminars in Asia and Africa in 1981.

The Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) agreed to give financial grants to organise the seminars.



## The objectives of the seminar

It is of greatest importance to strengthen blind women in their efforts to acquire education, training and job opportunities and also to increase the awareness of their situation, their rights and responsibilities and to raise their self-esteem.

The main objective of the seminar was to contribute to the improvement of the situation of blind women by creating an awareness of their own situation in society, their rights and the means to reach the goals of social integration.

The objective was also to train blind women leaders to participate more efficiently in the future efforts within organisations of and for the blind to better the situation of blind women.



*Miss Elisabeth Abay, Ethiopia,  
was elected secretary of  
The Advisory Committee of Blind  
Women of Africa, ACBWA.*

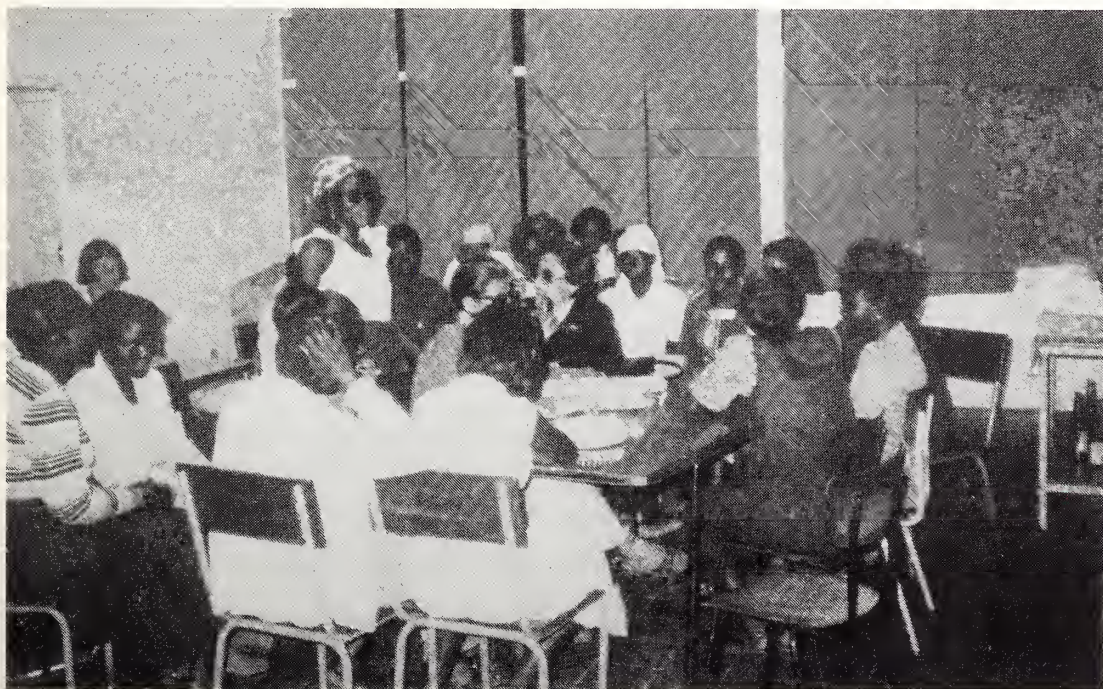


# Contents of the seminar

During the Decade of Women 1975–85 a great deal is being done for the improvement of the situation of women in the areas of health care, education, vocational training and employment. The seminar dealt with these subjects from a blind woman's point of view and also covered organisation management, leadership training and rehabilitation. Important items were:

- exposition of the situation of blind women, their achievements and prospects in the world, in the region and in the family.
- information and practical experience regarding organisation management
- presentation of various aspects of general education and special education for blind girls/women
- exchange of experiences from the current work in rehabilitation, both institutionalised and community-based. This included home management, gardening, handicraft, orientation and mobility
- stimulation of vocational training, income generating activities and employment in both rural and urban areas.

*Group discussion. Mrs Victoria Mwalibie, Ghana, is expressing her point of view to the other participants.*



# **Implementation**

## **Date and place of the seminar**

For many years SRF has had good contacts with the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind, ENAB, formally Ethiopian Co-operative Union of the Blind, and has recognised its hard work for the blind. SRF made an enquiry to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Ethiopia and it was willing to accept Ethiopia as the host country of this seminar. As ENAB was prepared to assume the responsibilities concerning the preparations and the realisation of the seminar, a Local Arrangements Committee was set up. The Committee was in charge of all local arrangements, e.g. accommodation, transportation, secretariat and public relations. It also arranged study visits and engaged local lecturers.

Sebeta School for the Blind, a boarding school situated 22 km outside Addis Ababa, was selected as a suitable venue for the seminar. Two student houses and a few classrooms were remodelled by using the money budgeted for lodging the seminar participants. SIDA approved of this investment. The participants shared rooms with each other four by four. The daily meals were transported from a nearby restaurant and served at the school.

## **Assistance from the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind, ENAB**

SRF received excellent co-operation and assistance from the local arrangements co-ordinator, Ato Bekele Selassie, General Secretary of ENAB and from the staff. Ato Bekele supervised the remodelling of the school. The Association provided the seminar with transcribers and copyists. Being located far outside Addis Ababa the seminar participants and instructors were dependant on the transportation provided by ENAB.

ENAB arranged study visits to make the participants acquainted with various job opportunities for the disabled available in Ethiopia. Thanks to ENAB's knowledge of suitable specialists, it was possible to engage competent lecturers.

## **Mass media coverage of the seminar**

The seminar was given a wide coverage by television, radio and the press. Both the opening and the closing ceremonies were



covered. Special radio and TV-programmes were made on the topics of the seminar showing orientation and mobility training and handicraft activities, in which participants, instructors and organizers were interviewed.

## **Seminar instructors**

SRF sent four women as organisers/instructors;

Miss Birgitta Johanneson,  
Mrs. Eva Klingberg,  
Mrs. Berit Norstedt,  
Mrs. Kerstin Rosencrantz

WCWB and IFB were invited to send one instructor each, specialised in the situation of blind women and in organisation management. Dr Fatima Shah represented IFB. Due to circumstances beyond their control Mrs. Dorina de Gouvea Nowill, president of WCWB and Mrs. Doris Anin, WCWB, chairman of the Committee on the Advancement of the Status of Blind Women, could not attend. (The list of instructors see Appendix A.)

## **Seminar participants**

In Februari, 1981, letters of invitation were sent to the affiliates of WCWB and IFB in each of the following countries;

Egypt	Nigeria
Ethiopia	Sierra Leone
Gambia	Tanzania
Ghana	Uganda
Kenya	Zambia
Liberia	Zimbabwe
Malawi	

The letters stated that the affiliates in each country were to jointly select two candidates for the seminar. Unfortunately, Gambia was not able to send representatives due to a coup d'etat. (List of participants see Appendix A.)

The selected candidates should preferably meet the following requirements:

- she should be blind or partially sighted and not more than 35 years of age

- she ought to have secondary school education. If this was not possible, she should at least have a good knowledge of English and know English braille.
- she should be willing to prepare a report on the situation of blind women in her country and present it at the seminar
- she should be interested in and prepared to work for the cause of blind women in her country.

The participants came from twelve African countries. Their ages ranged between seventeen and thirty-eight years. Five of them were partially sighted, three were sighted and the others were blind. Six women were married and some of them had children while they at the same time held a job.

The variety of vocational training and job opportunities is limited in Africa. Therefore, most of the participants were teachers for blind or sighted children at primary, secondary or university levels. Other occupations represented were braille instructor, home economist instructor, rehabilitation officer, psychologist and telephone operator.

The participants' good knowledge of written and spoken English simplified the co-operation between the participants themselves. It also lead to interesting and lively discussions with lecturers, especially on the topic "Integration and Full Participation".

## **Seminar material and equipment**

Seminar material was sent to the participants in advance and consisted of:

- Lectures on the situation of blind women, recorded on cassette.
- The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in braille or inkprint.
- Country reports from African countries represented at the Leadership Training Seminar in Lusaka, Zambia, 1979, on cassette.
- Recommendations on what a country report could contain, in braille.
- The manual for the Leadership Training Seminar held in Lusaka in 1979, in braille, inkprint or on cassette. The contents of the manual were divided into four major headings:

1. About organisations
2. The meetings
3. Association management
4. The visually handicapped

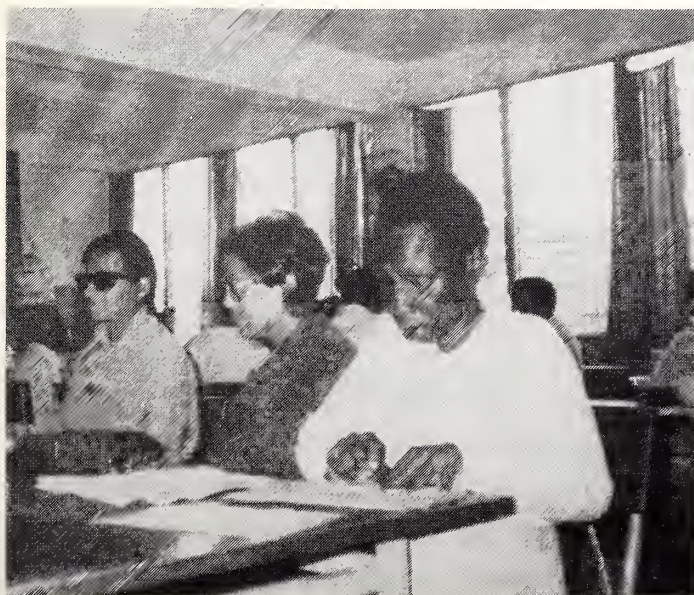
SRF provided technical equipment needed for the seminar, i.e.

- braille type writers
- braille paper and brailon
- tape recorders and cassettes
- slates
- white canes
- magnifiers
- handicraft material etc.

## **Working methods used at the seminar**

One of the main reasons for bringing together participants from twelve countries in Africa was to give them the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences. Therefore, much time was spent on presentation of country reports describing the situation of blind women in the twelve countries and on discussions about what activities could be undertaken. Specialists were invited to the seminar to increase the participants' knowledge. Time was devoted to questions and discussions in connection with each lecture.

During the workshops the participants were divided into groups of six which gave them a good opportunity to discuss ideas, experiences and problems relevant to their own countries.



*The Chairman of ACWBA, Mrs Eunice Mburu from Kenya, uses her slate when taking notes while the Egyptian representatives listen to what is said.*



Many opportunities were given to practice how to conduct a meeting, voting procedures and how to come to a decision. Time was also devoted to many group work sessions that prepared the participants for their future work, i.e. spreading information about the blind to the public, planning practical workshops, arranging for informative seminars. Each country made a Plan for Future Actions according to its own needs. (Examples from group work and workshop, see Appendix D.)

## Subjects of the seminar

Information about **the situation of blind women** in the world and in the region was provided in lectures and in the country reports prepared by the participants. Methods aimed at informing the public on these matters were practised (see Appendix D, E, F and G).

One of the objectives of the seminar was to train potential blind women leaders. Therefore information and training in **leadership and organisation management** was given at the seminar. Also the objectives of an organisation or a committee were covered.

**General education** is considered a necessity for everybody in today's society but blind children's access to **special education** vary considerably in developing countries at the primary, secondary and university levels as well as between rural and urban areas. When covering this subject, special attention was given to the question of residential schools versus integrated programmes.

Health status is lower among women than among men. The subject **Health Care** dealt with both women's own health and the health of their families, e.g. malnutrition, access to clean water and prevention of diseases, some of which can cause blindness.

**Rehabilitation and vocational training programmes** were presented and discussed. They are often concentrated to urban areas while most people live in rural districts. Some organisations working for the improvement of the situation of the blind have set up rehabilitation centres and/or mobile rehabilitation service units for rural training.

Representatives from women's organisations and UN agencies presented **adult education** projects aiming at improving the standard and social status of women especially in rural areas, e.g. water and health projects, nutrition and cooking programmes including energy saving methods. Literacy campaigns were also

included. Integration of handicapped into these programmes was the general desire expressed by the participants. At present, however, integration is rarely the case.

**Employment.** There are some vocational training centres in Africa, but placement services are scarce. Seldom does a blind person get a job through these services. When that does occur, very few resources are devoted to follow-up and support.

The Ethiopian National Association of the Blind runs a production centre for making carpets, hand bags and brushes. Before becoming employed some blind men and women are given the opportunity of adult education and vocational training. Study visits were also made to United Abilities Factory, an umbrella and dry cell battery factory, and to Tailors' Co-operative, both run by the handicapped themselves. Many hundred handicapped persons earn their living in these factories.

## **Distribution of the subjects**

<b>Organisation Management</b> including practical experiences in leadership training	35 hours
<b>Rehabilitation and Vocational Training</b> including workshops (18 hours)	29 hours
<b>Situation of Blind Women</b> including country reports (10 hours) and plans for future action (13 hours)	24 hours
<b>Employment</b> including study visits (8 hours)	12 hours
<b>Education</b>	2 hours
<b>Prevention of Blindness</b>	2 hours
<b>Official ceremonies</b>	<u>4 hours</u>
	<u>108 hours</u>

Out of 108 hours, 18 hours were spent on workshops, 19 hours on group work and discussions and 8 hours on study visits.



# Achievements

## Conclusions

In many ways this seminar was a manifestation of blind women's ability to play an active role in the improvement of their own situation. The participants came to know through lectures, group work and workshops that:

- their own situation is not unique but is shared by millions of other blind women in Africa and the rest of the world,
- loss of sight usually means loss of status, privileges and rights in society and within the family,
- women meet many obstacles which prevent them from taking part in education, rehabilitation/vocational training and employment. Examples of such obstacles mentioned are:

Mobility problems

Overprotection

Lack of self confidence

Blind people's negative attitude towards themselves

Unawareness of the public and the government

Lack of education facilities

Employment problems

- blind women need to assemble in small groups to discuss and identify areas where the need for concerned action is most pressing. Therefore, the participants obtained experience in how to prepare informative seminars and practical workshops,
- there are many projects in action that teach the blind how to live a normal and productive life, but women seldom take part,
- vocational training should be adapted to the needs and capability of each individual and should take into account the job opportunities available in that very locality,
- training should be provided in homes or in areas familiar to the blind. This is especially important to blind women. For many reasons women have greater difficulties than men in leaving their homes for a longer period of training,
- through publicity campaigns both the public and the government will adopt a more positive attitude towards the rights and capa-

bilities of the blind. Preparations for such activities were made during the seminar.

## **Blind women in organisations of and for the blind**

While preparing for the training seminars in Asia and Africa Mrs Dorina Nowill, President of WCWB brought up the question:

Are blind women prepared to take over leadership positions in organisations of or for the blind? To get an answer to this question she sent out a questionnaire to organisations in many countries in the world concerning the number of blind women working in the organisation, their schooling and positions held. In her paper she presented the results in the form of two hypotheses.

- H<sub>1</sub> The organisations of and/or for the blind themselves are serving as agents of discrimination towards blind women, thus reflecting society's prejudiced attitudes.
- H<sub>2</sub> Blind women themselves, due to their lack of preparation or lack of awareness of their rights, etc., are the major factor for not yet having assumed their roles within those organisations (see footnote 1).

When the paper was presented at the seminar these hypotheses were met with support. Also the conclusions above are in general accordance with the two hypotheses.

## **The importance of forming women committees**

In spite of many obstacles the participants believe in the necessity to organise themselves in women's committees. A more active participation contributes to a better self-expression and self-realisation. Blind persons are very dependent on the outcome of new laws, regulations, services etc. By forming women's committees within the organisations of/for the blind, women's knowledge and experience will be better utilized. Instead of being the target group of care and teaching, women can become an active partner in the planning of a better future for the blind. Forming a women's committee is also in accordance with United Nations'

---

1) "The Status of Blind Women at the Organisations of and for the Blind and how to improve it, by Mrs Dorina de Gouvea Nowill. (Conclusions from the paper see Appendix G.)



policy. The UN's Commission for Social Development adopted, in 1975, a resolution where the Council called upon Member States to adopt popular participation as a basic policy measure in national development strategy. It also urges national non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to take part in the development process in setting up goals, formulating policies and implementing plans on those matters, which directly affect their economic advancement and social progress. Committee activities may be a step in this direction.

## **A women's committee's programme**

Dr. Fatima Shah suggested, at the seminar, a 7-point programme for a women's committee to carry out:

*Mrs Dorothy Ngara and Miss Ketiwe Tshuma from Zimbabwe in an African setting.*



1. To campaign for membership of blind women in self-help movements in urban and rural areas.
2. To get representation on the Executive Committees of the organisations.
3. To organise training seminars in management and work of associations and exchange information and know-how.
4. To persuade and motivate the relevant Ministries of their Government, responsible for women's affairs and the disabled, to take action towards the solution of their problems.
5. To make contacts with women's organisations to enhance social integration as well as to inform them of the situation and capabilities of blind women.
6. To educate the public through all media about the abilities and potential of blind women. This may reduce the prejudices and discriminations against blind women and create a favourable climate for a normal and useful life as daughters, wives and mothers.
7. To work for unity and discipline amongst the organisations of blind people which is absolutely essential for the success of their cause.

## **Resolutions adopted at the seminar**

At a meeting chaired by Dr. Fatima Shah on 16 August, 1981, the participants decided to adopt five resolutions to bring home to be used in public relations activities and in discussions with governments. The official resolutions cover the following topics:

1. Formation of an Advisory Committee of Blind Women of Africa (ACBWA)
2. Special education to be included in teacher's training
3. Consultative status of organisations of/for the blind with their governments
4. Call for action during IYDP
5. Appreciation to SIDA, SRF and ENAB.

(For further details see Appendix C)



## **Formation of the Advisory Committee of Blind Women of Africa, ACBWA**

Besides local women's committees, discussed above, a regional committee was judged necessary. Therefore the participants unanimously decided to establish an Advisory Committee of Blind Women of Africa, (for the purpose of ACBWA see Appendix C).

Mrs. Eunice Mburu, Kenya, was elected chairperson and Miss Elisabeth Abay, Ethiopia, was elected secretary.

## **Concluding remarks and recommendations made during the seminar**

About 10% of the world population is **disabled**, that is 450 000 000 persons. This figure equals **more than the total population of Africa**. Out of these at least one in ten is blind. In addition there is a large number of visually impaired. Most families in the developing countries have an extended family structure. Statistically at least one member is handicapped in a three generation family. An improvement of the situation of the blind and the visually impaired would be of social and economic importance to a substantial part of the population.

### **Education**

In most African countries there are a few schools for the blind, mostly run by a mission. A small number of blind students is given access to primary and secondary education. Children from remote areas are brought to an artificial environment, adapted to the blind student's needs. The longer the student stays the more difficult it becomes to go back to his/her community. The problems of integration is of greatest importance when it comes to education of blind girls. Lack of integrated programmes means shortage of adequate material given to the local schools. As sending a girl to a far distant boarding school often is out of the question, the result is that few blind get proper education. Programmes with resource centres as embarked upon in Malawi and Tanzania could perhaps be a solution for some other countries.

### **Rehabilitation and vocational training**

As 76% of the population in Africa live in rural areas, one would expect that rehabilitation and vocational training programmes were



run mostly in those areas. But no, on the contrary, the very few rehabilitation centres that exist are mostly situated in the cities. Many a blind girl has to leave her family behind to get training in the city and the student thus becomes urbanised. Training is given in

*A blind employee is weaving a thick rug with some assistance from a sighted person at Production Centre no 1, run by the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind.*





reading and writing braille, in orientation and mobility, and in Every Day Living Skills (EDLS). These subjects help the blind person to become more self-reliant, which she often has been denied at home or at the boarding school. While the person goes through a positive evolution her family is alien to this change. Therefore, after the training the trainee often remains in the city together with her fellow friends where jobs are easier to obtain. This trend is most unfortunate. A few successful projects are in action indicating the possibilities of improvement of the rural blind, by involving the immediate family in the rehabilitation process.

Previously, predominantly men among the blind have had the opportunity of obtaining education and training. Now, when even women to a certain extent are getting access to education, it has been noted that education in itself is not enough for a blind woman to reach full participation. A woman, married or not, needs to know home economics, nutrition, childcare, handicraft etc. A man can manage without that.

It is of greatest importance that this training is given in parallel to the ordinary education. At present when most girls do not have access to traditional education these skills ought to be provided to blind girls and women, preferably as close as possible to their homes. This kind of training is already in action in some countries with positive results.

In most countries United Nations and Non-Governmental (NGO) Agencies run rural programmes on water and health, nutrition, child care and home economics – subjects that women need to be taught whether they are sighted or not, literate or not. With some extra awareness from the programme makers, the disabled women could be included in these projects. Most blind women will not need a highly paid, trained, technical teacher but a sighted friend to assist her. Integrated participation in projects bring down the cost of rehabilitation to a minimum at the same time as it opens up a new way to reach "Full Participation and Equality" for the many.

## **Employment**

The number of job opportunities considered suitable for blind women in Africa is today limited. For educated women the job of teaching is the most common occupation. The very few that hold jobs not considered typical stereotyped occupations for blind

women prove that all the capabilities of the person must be taken into consideration when choosing a job or an education. Hence, it is an urgent necessity to provide the blind with adequate training for suitable jobs according to modern techniques. Counselling and guidance in accordance with the labour market is necessary. Placement officers ought to be appointed to help the blind woman find suitable jobs and make follow-ups. Those efforts can probably open up a wider range of possibilities that may suit the blind woman's needs and wishes e.g. employment in home-work schemes, small-scale enterprises, self-employment, cooperatives, sheltered workshops etc.

### **Information about the blind through mass media**

Intensive campaigns have been made in some countries to change the present negative attitude of society towards the blind. Such an improvement also counteracts the negative attitude among the blind themselves. Information on causes of blindness and prevention of blindness enlighten people and lessen prejudice and misunderstandings. Radio interviews of blind and theatre plays about them help the public see the individual behind the dark glasses instead of the group she or he represents. Replacing prejudice with information improves attitudes and thus, facilitates promotion of living conditions.

### **Intra-African Exchange**

It is important to stress that knowledge about integrated education, rehabilitation, placement services and various kinds of vocational training and job opportunities is already at hand in Africa but scattered. Intra-African exchange has been very limited up till now, but the participants realized its potential.

### **The participants' intentions and plans after the seminar**

Each country made its own Plan for Future Action. The general theme was "Integration and Participation". The plans often contained schemes about:

- spreading information about blind women and about this seminar to the public, the organisations of or for the blind, politicians and to women's organisations,



- arranging informative seminars aiming at establishing a women's committee within the organisation,
- arranging practical workshops aiming at improving women's skills e.g. in home economics or in income generating activities,
- making contacts with women's organisations to stimulate integration of blind women in the organisation,
- making contacts with international agencies to promote integration of blind women in their programmes.

(The Plan for Future Action of Kenya is representative of most of the other plans. It can be found in Appendix D.)

# **The participants' opinion of the seminar**

As an aid in running the seminar the participants, upon arrival, were asked to state their expectations. At the end of the seminar, they were asked to evaluate the three weeks. The answers are summarized below as a guide to future seminars.

## **Expectations**

The participants formulated their expectations in group discussions. One of the participants made a summary of the expectations as follows:

We, the participants of the seminar, expect to

1. gather new ideas, experience and knowledge to carry home,
2. learn about the situation of blind women in different countries,
3. be in the position to organise seminars for blind women in our countries,
4. become good leaders for blind women in our countries,
5. get the knowledge on how to form a women's committee in our countries,
6. learn how to stimulate the formation of training programmes for blind women to raise their self-esteem,
7. be able to find some solutions to the problems of finding life partners,
8. establish cordial relationships with our fellow participants and exchange ideas,
9. get assistance from the organisers on the formation of committees for blind women in our countries and on training blind women in home economics, health care and home management.

## **Evaluation of the seminar**

At the end of the seminar each participant filled out an evaluation questionnaire. The judgements were, on the whole, consistent. The results are summarized below.

All participants had a nice but long journey to the seminar, which to some of them included an over night's stay. Food and accommodation was to their satisfaction although the food sometimes was strange to them. They had felt safe, comfortable and free to move about.

Most of them had received their material well in time for them to read and get prepared. Information on writing equipment available at the seminar would have helped the participants in their packing. More documentation in braille on lectures, reports, manuals on vocational training etc. would have been appreciated. There were no facilities for transcribing that amount of information during such a limited time. Instead, complementary information has been sent out afterwards.

As this seminar was the first of its kind in Africa, one three-week seminar cannot fill all the needs. The participants felt that they had much more to gain from each other and asked for follow-up seminars in the future.

Before closing the seminar the participants wanted to secure the possibility of having information spread to them regarding regional programmes, activities and international decisions that may be important to them.

The country reports were considered valuable. Learning about the unsatisfactory situation of blind women in the world and especially in the African countries was challenging to them.

Training in organisation management and planning of activities gave the participants tools for their future work. The participants left for their home countries most satisfied and encouraged with new knowledge about how to assist their fellow blind women.

## **Economy**

The Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) covered all costs in connection with the seminar for the instructors and participants such as travel costs, accommodation and study material. All other costs were covered by SRF. Part of the funds for accommodation was used to upgrade the facilities of the Sebeta School for the Blind where the seminar was held.



## List of participants

### Egypt

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Mrs. Ebtesam Mohamed Mohamed Abaza  
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### Malawi

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### Nigeria

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### Sierra Leone

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## **Tanzania**

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## **Uganda**

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## **Zambia**

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## **Zimbabwe**

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Miss Ketiwe Tshuma  
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## **List of instructors**

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Victoria Road  
Karachi  
Pakistan

## Programme

Training Seminar for Blind Women Leaders in Africa.

### Monday, 3 August

- Afternoon

Official opening of the seminar  
Speeches by

- a. Ato Andargachew Tiruneh, President ANAB
- b. Mrs. Kerstin Rosencrantz, SRF
- c. Mrs. Maj-Britt Amer, SIDA
- d. The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs

Presentation of the instructors, participants and the programme.

### Tuesday, 4 August

- Morning

Blind women and international organizations of and for the blind.

1. Presentation of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB) by Mrs. Kerstin Rosencrantz, SRF.
2. The International Federation of the Blind (IFB) by Ato Amare Asfaw.
3. The situation of blind women in the world. Results from a world wide questionnaire study made by Mrs. Dorina de Gouvea Nowill, WCWB, presented by Mrs. Kerstin Rosencrantz.

- Afternoon

4. The social and legal status of women in Ethiopia, past and present, by comrade Aster Birhame Selassie of Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association (REWA)
5. Expectations of the Seminar (Group discussion)
6. Preparations for presentation of the country reports.

### Wednesday, 5 August

- Morning

Organization and management

- 1-2. The position of Blind women in organizations and how to improve it, a report made

by Mrs. Dorina de Gouvea Nowill, presented by Mrs. Kerstin Rosencrantz, SRF.

3. Participants prepare questions for the study visit.

- Afternoon

Study visit to the head quarters of the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind (ENAB) and production Centre No. 1.

### Thursday, 6 August

- Morning

1. Orientation and Mobility – one aspect of the rehabilitation process by Ato Gebrekidan Kebede, Education Centre, ENAB.

2. Programmes of international organizations during the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) by Mrs. Eva Klingberg, SRF.

- Afternoon

Group work: Activities during IYDP for spreading information about blind women. Introduction by Mrs. Eva Klingberg, SRF.

- Evening

Country reports to be followed by discussion

### Friday, 7 August

- Morning

- 1-2. Cooperatives and self-help organizations by Ato Legesse Mamo from HASIDA.

3. Presentation of country reports.

- Afternoon

Study visit to Tailors' cooperative of Disabled persons.

- Evening

Country Reports followed by discussion.

### Saturday, 8 August

- Morning

Rehabilitation

1. Blind women in Tanzania by Birgitta Johansson, SRF.



2–3. Home management and gardening by Woizero Kibjabe Tafesse, Ministry of Agriculture.

- Afternoon

4. Handicrafts by Miss Birgitta Johannesson, SRF.

5–6. Rural Rehabilitation – case studies from Ghana by participants.

- Evening

Social evening.

### **Sunday, 9 August**

- Morning

Free

- Afternoon

Band music by ENAB's Band

### **Monday, 10 August**

- Morning

1–2. Incentives for creating an organization of the blind and how to form an organization, by Dr. Fatima Shah, Pakistan Association of the Blind (PAB).

3. Education

Special education as part of the regular school system by Mrs. Kerstin Rosencrantz, SRF.

- Afternoon

4. The need for and methods of integration with particular emphasis on education and employment by Dr. Zotovic, International Labour Organization, ILO.

- Evening

Country reports

### **Tuesday, 11 August**

- Morning

Study visit to the United Abilities Co. (U.A.C.) Lunch, Addis Ababa, given by ENAB.

- Afternoon

5–6. Organization management

- The duties of each board member
- The rights and duties of members

by Dr. Fatima Shah, PAB.

### **Wednesday, 12 August**

- Morning

Workshop – day 1

Group 1 – Orientation and mobility, Ato Gebrekidan Kebede

Group 2 – Home management, Woizero Tizta Yitnagashaw

Group 3 – Gardening, Ato Tessema Mume

Group 4 – Handicraft, Miss Birgitta Johannesson

- Afternoon

Organization management

4. How to run a meeting by Dr. Fatima Shah, PAB.

5. Documentation of the morning session.

- Evening

Country reports

### **Thursday, 13 August**

- Morning

Workshop – day 2

Group 1 – Home management

Group 2 – Gardening

Group 3 – Handicraft

Group 4 – Orientation and Mobility

- Afternoon

4–5. A presentation of African Training and Research Centre, ATRCW, by Woizero Fetenu Bekele.

6. Documentation of the morning session.

### **Friday, 14 August**

- Morning

Workshop – day 3

Group 1 – Gardening

Group 2 – Handicraft

Group 3 – Orientation and Mobility

Group 4 – Home management

- Afternoon

4. Special schools or integrated education by Mrs. K. Rosencrantz, SRF.

5. Documentation of the morning session.

- Evening

Country reports

## **Saturday, 15 August**

- Morning

Workshop – day 4

Group 1 – Handicraft

Group 2 – Orientation and Mobility

Group 3 – Home management

Group 4 – Gardening

- Afternoon

4. Documentation of the morning session.

5–6. General discussion. Evaluation of the workshops.

- Evening

Social evening

## **Sunday, 16 August**

- Morning

Free

- Afternoon

Country reports

- Evening

Women's Committee. Is there a need for a Women's Committee within an organization of or for the blind? By Dr. Fatima Shah, PAB. Discussion.

## **Monday, 17 August**

- Morning

Organization management

1–3. – How to come to a decision  
– Voting procedure

- Afternoon

How to plan a seminar, by Mrs. Eva Klingberg, SRF.

- Evening

Dinner given by ENAB.

## **Tuesday, 18 August**

- Morning

1–2. UNICEF's Programmes for women and children in Africa by Woiz. Tsehay Yitbarek.

3. How to write a proposal by Mrs. Eva Klingberg.

- Afternoon

Plans for future actions. Group work. How to plan a seminar by Mrs. Eva Klingberg.

- Evening

Country reports.

## **Wednesday, 19 August**

- Morning

1–2. Causes of blindness and Preventive measures by Dr. Paulos Kenaa from Menelik Hospital.

- Afternoon

Plans for future action. Group work.

- Evening

Women's Committee (continued) and discussions on marriage.

## **Thursday, 20 August**

- Morning

1–2. Plans for future actions. Group work to be reported by the participants.

3. A presentation of the Swedish African Co-operation between Organizations of the Blind, SACOB. By Mr. Keshi Chisambi and Mr. Bengt Högborg.

- Afternoon

4–5. To be a good leader by Dr. Fatima Shah, PAB.

## **Friday, 21 August**

- Morning

1–2. Plans for future actions. Group work to be reported by the participants.

3. Summary and Evaluation. Discussion.

- Afternoon

Closing ceremony

Speeches by Ato Andargachew Tiruneh, President ENAB, Mrs. Kerstin Rosencrantz, SRF, Mrs. Eunice Mburu, Kenya, participants' representative, Dr. Fatima Shah, PAB.





## Resolutions adopted at the training seminar for blind women leaders in Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3–21 August, 1981

### Resolution 1

#### Formation of ACBWA

The participants unanimously propose the formation of an Advisory Committee of Blind Women of Africa, ACBWA, with all participants as its members. ACBWA shall encourage an exchange of opinions, information and experiences among the blind women of participating countries. ACBWA shall specifically provide information about follow-up seminars and other relevant programmes. ACBWA shall also establish contacts with similar women committees in other regions of the world and with the International Federation of the Blind (IFB) and the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB).

### Resolution 2

#### Special education to be included in teacher's training

In order to provide education for blind children in both urban and rural areas the integrated system of education has to be gradually introduced which requires that all trained teachers of primary and secondary education should have basic knowledge of special education.

Therefore, all national governments are requested to include special education in the curricula of all teacher training colleges.

### Resolution 3

#### Consultative status of organisations of and for the blind with their governments

Whereas it is essential that the needs and priorities are expressed by the blind persons themselves and since it is the responsibility of the government to meet the basic needs of its citizens, it is important to establish permanent contacts with

the governments. Therefore it is recommended that every effort is made by organisations of and for the blind to acquire consultative status with their respective governments.

### Resolution 4

#### Call for action

The governments of the different countries are urged to take practical steps during the International Year of the Disabled Persons (IYDP) and decide to implement the resolutions passed by:

- a. The United Nations about the rights of disabled persons during 1975.
- b. ILO (International Labour Organisation) with regard to the employment of disabled persons.
- c. The conference on the situation of blind women held in Yugoslavia in 1975.
- a. The United Nations

General Assembly resolution 32/133. 1978.

### International Year for Disabled Persons

#### The General Assembly

**Recalling** its resolution 31/123 of 16 December 1976 by which it proclaimed the year 1981 International Year for Disabled Persons and decided to devote that year to the realization of a set of objectives, including:

- (a) Helping disabled persons in their physical and psychological adjustment to society;
- (b) Promoting all national and international efforts to provide disabled persons with proper assistance, training, care and guidance, to make available to them opportunities for suitable work and to ensure their full integration in society;
- (c) Encouraging study and research projects designed to facilitate the practical participation of disabled persons in daily life, for example by improving their access to public buildings and transportation systems;
- (d) Educating and informing the public of the rights of disabled persons to participate in and contribute to various aspects of economic, social and political life;

- (e) Promoting effective measures for the prevention of disability and for the rehabilitation of disabled persons.

**Recalling** in particular paragraph 4 of its resolution 31/123, in which it requested the Secretary General to elaborate, in consultation with Member States, specialized agencies and the organisations concerned, a draft programme for the International Year for Disabled Persons.

**Recalling** its resolution 31/93 to refrain from new activities not programmed in the medium-term plan unless a pressing need of an unforeseeable nature arises as determined by the General Assembly.

**Having considered with satisfaction** the report of the Secretary General on the annexed draft programme for the International Year for Disabled Persons,<sup>1</sup>

1. **Approves** the proposals of the Secretary General, contained in his report, for preparatory work for the period 1978–79;
2. **Authorizes** the Secretary General to undertake the measures required to implement these proposals, including the necessary information activities prior to and during the International Year for Disabled Persons;
3. **Decides** that the International Year for Disabled Persons represents such a pressing need of an unforeseeable nature;
4. **Decides** to establish an Advisory Committee for the International Year for Disabled Persons, composed of the representatives of fifteen Member States who shall be appointed, on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, by the Chairman of the Third Committee, in concurrence with the regional groups;
5. **Decides** that the task of the Advisory Committee shall be to consider, and to consult with Member States and specialized agencies on, the programme for the International Year for Disabled Persons, prepared by the Secretary General;
6. **Requests** the Secretary General to convene the Advisory Committee no later than March 1979 at the Headquarters of the United Nations and to submit the report on that meeting to the General Assembly for consideration at its thirty-fourth session;

7. **Appeals** to Member States to make in due time generous voluntary contributions for the International Year for Disabled Persons;
8. **Encourages** Member States and organizations concerned to take specific action in the preparation of the observance of the International Year for Disabled Persons;
9. **Decides** to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-fourth session the item entitled "International Year for Disabled Persons".

## International Labour Office's Resolution concerning Disabled Persons<sup>1</sup>

Resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 65th Session (Geneva, June 1979).

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation.

**Bearing in mind** that the United Nations General Assembly has declared the year 1981 as the International Year for Disabled Persons, with its theme "full participation".

**Bearing in mind** also the two resolutions of the World Health Organisation at its 28th and 29th World Health Assemblies in 1975 and 1976, one concerning mental retardation and the other concerning disability prevention and rehabilitation.

**Noting** also the ECOSOC resolution concerning the prevention of disability and rehabilitation of disabled persons and the report of the implementation of this resolution adopted in the Commission for Social Development at its 26th Session in 1979.

**Noting** also certain particular recommendations adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in 1976 and the follow-up of these recommendations in the ECOSOC meeting in 1978.

**Noting** further the UNESCO agreement on importation of educational, scientific and cultural materials, adopted by its General Conference in 1950.

**Recalling** the resolution concerning vocational rehabilitation and social reintegration of disabled or handicapped persons adopted by the 60th Session of the International Labour Conference in 1975,

1) A/32/288

1) Adopted on 26 June 1979



which urged member States to recognise that all persons should have the right to benefit from vocational rehabilitation and training in order to be able to perform suitable work, if they so wish, and called on all public authorities and employers' and workers' organisations to promote maximum opportunities for disabled or handicapped persons to perform, secure and retain suitable employment.

**Recognising** that the ILO adopted in 1955 the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation (No 99), in which have been further promoted the ideas existing also in the two earlier Recommendations, the Vocational Guidance Recommendation, 1949 (No 87), and the Vocational Training (Adults) Recommendation, 1950 (No 88).

**Noting** the view of the Director-General expressed at the 210th Session of the Governing Body that the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955 (no 99), although reasonably in line with what was currently required, needed to be followed up in practical ways.

**Noting** that since 1955: (i) Recommendations Nos 87 and 88 have been superseded by the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No 150); (ii) the vocational rehabilitation and social integration of an ever growing number of physically and mentally disabled and handicapped persons have been of the utmost importance for every member State, on both social and economic grounds; (iii) technical innovations have made it possible to improve the physical and mental conditions of the disabled and the handicapped and to give them new prospects of employment;

Invites the Governing Body of the International Labour Office –

(a) **to instruct** the Director-General to mark the International Year for Disabled Persons by laying stress on activities designed to contribute to the Year, for example:

- (i) **by publishing** relevant ILO standards and by assisting Member States, in their request, to implement them;
- (ii) **by gathering**, as far as possible for 1981, documentation on legislation, experience and research in the area of social integration and vocational rehabilitation of the physically and mentally disabled and handicapped in member countries;
- (iii) **by making** an appropriate contribution to the related activities of the United

Nations, the World Health Organisation and other members of the United Nations family;

(b) **to consider** placing on the agenda of an early session of the International Labour Conference the question of revising the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955 (No 99).

(c) The Conference on the Situation of Blind Women (Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1975).

### **WCWB, IFB. Resolution adopted by the International Conference on the Situation of Blind women, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 18–20 November, 1975**

**Recognising** that there are more than 16 million totally blind people in the world, that an even larger number are visually handicapped and that at least half of them are women and girls;

**Noting** with concern that more than 70 % of the world's blindness is preventable;

**Aware** that despite the rapid advances made recently in the education, rehabilitation and employment of the blind, provision for blind women in most countries lags behind that for blind men and in some countries is non-existent;

**Noting** with emphatic approval the resolutions on the status of women made at the UN World Conference of International Women's Year, Mexico June 1975;

**Affirming** that no statement of women's rights can be comprehensive which does not take into account the special needs of separate groups including the blind and visually handicapped;

**Appreciating** the fact that blind women cannot exercise their rights as human beings without adequate provision for education, rehabilitation, employment and action to remove obstacles to their integration with Society.

#### **This Conference**

1. **Requests** all appropriate Specialized Agencies of the UN in considering and implementing programmes for the advancement of women, to make adequate provision for the particular needs of the blind and visually handicapped.
2. **Encourages** the International Research and Training Institute for Promotion of Women, created by the UN World Conference of Inter-



national Women's Year, to include in its programme of study the situation of blind and visually handicapped women.

3. **Urges** all governments in programmes and plans for education, health, social security and family welfare to take special account of the needs of blind and visually handicapped women, to develop such plans with the expert help of the organisations of and for the blind and to implement them by the use of professionally trained personnel.
4. **Recommends** international and national blind welfare organisations to review the adequacy of their provision for blind and visually handicapped women and to ensure that a fair proportion of the resources available should be channelled into practical programmes designed to improve the education, rehabilitation, including the establishment of centres where they do not exist, employment, according to individual needs, and the social status of women.
5. **Draws the attention** of governments and blind welfare organisations to the special needs of blind women who have additional handicaps.
6. **Encourages** national blind welfare organisations to take the initiative in the formation of

national multidisciplinary committees for the prevention of blindness.

7. **Invites** the appropriate Specialized Agencies of the UN and governments to undertake public information programmes by means of all mass communication media regarding the capacities of handicapped persons in terms compatible with human dignity.
8. **Exhorts** blind and visually handicapped women to participate actively in the attainment of these objectives through their organisations of and for the blind.

## Resolution 5

### Appreciation

The participants of the Training Seminar for Blind Women Leaders in Africa unanimously expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) for financing and the Swedish Federation of the Visually Handicapped (SRF) for conducting such a useful and informative seminar, which has met the current needs and requirements of blind women in Africa. We also would like to thank the president, secretary and other board members of the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind (ENAB) for hosting the seminar and making the stay both comfortable and enjoyable.

## Plans for Future Actions of Blind Women in Kenya

1. When coming back we shall brief our members of the Kenya Union of the Blind about the seminar. We shall tell them about the different ways of improving the lives of blind women and on the plans that we wish to be put into practice.
2. First, we must know the number of blind women who are already members of the Kenya Union of the Blind. We will call these members together and inform them about the seminar and what we have learnt about ways of improving their lives. We might have to call for two meetings because the blind live in different parts of the country. We shall present to them our wish to form a women's wing within our union so the Union will be able to help us where we need help.
3. We shall encourage the female members to take more part in the activities of the Union and also in the women's wing that we are hoping to form. We shall give them the task to contact blind women, and to encourage them to join the women's wing.
4. We shall try to organise a leaders' seminar of blind women and educate them in many different things.
5. The Kenya Union of the Blind have plans for putting up a sheltered workshop for blind women. We shall enforce this issue to be put into practice immediately. The skilled blind girls and women will be offered jobs there. The Union will find markets for their products.
6. We shall introduce ourselves to other women's organisations. We shall explain to them the needs of the blind women and the ways in which women can be helped and made independent. We shall ask these organisations to integrate blind women in their organisations as well as in their activities in handicraft and home management.
7. We shall try to persuade the district branches of women's organisations to get markets for the products that some of the blind women are able to produce. There are many blind women and girls who are trained at different domestic centres but cannot market their products when they return to their villages.

8. We hope that our women's wing will be able to associate with the women's organisations in the country because it is only through integration that other people can come to know the blind fully and be able to help them where necessary.

signed

Mrs. Eunice Njeri Mburu  
Miss Selina Nekesa Karani  
(Participants from Kenya)

## Workshops

### The participants plans of activities and seminars

During the seminar the participants made plans for activities on spreading information to the public and for seminars on home economics, gardening, handicraft and mobility. Their plans can be summarized as follows.

### An exhibition on spreading information on disabled persons to the public

The exhibition will be displayed at a public place e.g. the Community Hall or a library. The objective is to inform the public on what disabled persons are capable of doing. The disabled themselves will demonstrate their jobs and their technical aids. In addition posters will describe other jobs that for practical reasons can not be demonstrated e.g. in agriculture.

### A seminar on Home Economics

The objectives are to help blind women to manage their homes properly and to learn how to fight the three deadly enemies – ignorance, poverty and disease. In order to improve the health of the family, nutrition and cleanliness will be taught in theory and in practice by:

- cooking locally produced food in a proper way using their knowledge of nutrition and energy saving methods,
- learning to do the daily home work in the most efficient way,
- visiting the local health clinic to learn more about first aid and vaccinations to prevent diseases.

### **A seminar on Handicraft**

The objectives are to learn an income generating activity so as to become more independent, to make use of inexpensive local material e.g. sisal, bush fibres and old pieces of wool or other scrap material and to learn how to market the products.

The participating women will in practice learn how to use a knitting frame, a crochet hook and a needle to make clothings for their family or for selling. How to mend clothes and make decorations for the house will also be taught.

### **A seminar on Mobility**

Both sighted and blind women will participate. The objectives are to help blind women to become independent so as to move about freely in their homes, in their neighbourhood or in other familiar places.

The participants will first learn 'pre-cane-technique' and self protection. The sighted women will learn how to guide a blind person and the blind women will learn how to be guided. The various techniques of using the long cane will be taught.

### **A seminar on Gardening**

The objectives of the seminar are to make the participating women able to produce more food for the family and to introduce a variety of suitable vegetables to grow, to lessen their dependence on others in food production and to be able to raise the family income by selling some of the products at the market or learn how to preserve the vegetables.

The place of training will have to be either close to the participating women's homes or at a rehabilitation centre.

While making these preparations for the seminars the participants made a survey on what they already had and what they would need concerning suitable place of meeting, personnel, equipment and transportation. An estimate of the cost of the seminar was also made. The duration of the planned seminars varied from 1 day to 2 weeks depending on the economical situation of the organisations. Very often suggestions of follow-up seminars were included in the plans.



## Recommendations

Extract from "Blind Woman in the Region (Africa and Asia) – their Status and Role in Society as well as in the Family", by Dr. Fatima Shah, Pakistan.

### 1. Collection of Necessary Data and Information about Blind Women

It is obvious that no programmes or services can be planned or even the situation gauged accurately without the knowledge about the extent of the problem – what is needed are statistics and other information about blind women in the region under consideration i.e. Asia.

At a Technical Meeting and Regional Seminar held under the joint auspices of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (UNCSDHA) in September 1980 at Bangkok (Thailand) in which delegates, observers and experts from the countries of this region participated to prepare a World Plan of Action for International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) it was noted that none of the countries of the region had ever conducted a census in which statistics for the disabled were included.

However, in the light of the fact that another seminar on statistics and census in the same region was being conducted simultaneously in the same building in Bangkok, we were informed by a delegate from that seminar, who was requested to speak to us on this particular subject, that almost all the countries of this region had definite plans to include the collection of necessary data about the disabled persons in their national census being conducted during 1981 – IYDP. I know definitely that in Pakistan, my own country, the general census is being conducted during this month which includes a column for the census of the disabled persons. This is indeed a good augury for the future as we can now expect to have information about the extent of the problem i.e. the number of blind women and their location. Another project that will have to be taken by all Governments of this region is to conduct a house-hold survey to collect further information about the disabled persons with special reference to blind women which will be extremely important for our future work and establishment of necessary services for them. This information

cannot be acquired in a general census i.e. socio-economic background, present education and training, degree of disability or blindness, age, marital status, etc. etc. It would be the responsibility of the organisations of/for the blind to motivate the Governments of their respective countries and co-operate with them to conduct such a household survey for the collection of this extremely important information which would be a primary need for the establishment of necessary services for blind women in the lights of their local situation and needs.

### 2. Training of Personnel

In the orientation and rehabilitation programmes for blind women – the scientific solutions may best be done by the Government and voluntary agencies in cooperation with each other through special training programmes and/or establishment of disciplines in one or more Universities of every country where multipurpose workers could be trained for disabled persons. Women should definitely be included in this training to work with blind and other disabled women.

### 3. Communication and Transport

This is a big problem today all over and more so in this region. Apart from high prices of fuel there is a lack of a proper network of public transport services specially for rural areas. This problem is a great hindrance in the execution of development programmes. To overcome this problem, to a certain extent, it is suggested that workers should also be trained from the rural areas. Furthermore the voluntary organisations specially self-help movements are advised to extend their branches and work programmes into small districts and from there into villages.

### 4. Establishment of Services for Total Rehabilitation

#### (a) Home Services

Itinerant, social workers to enter the homes where blind girls and adults are confined and then to educate parents, relatives, neighbours and the community to break age-old misconceptions, prejudices and negative attitudes to blindness. It is recommended that multi-purpose trained workers are included in the primary health services of every country for this job who will be able to either refer them to relevant medical or rehabilitative

institutions or, if required, give them training at home in daily living, house-hold and other crafts.

#### (b) Education

Establishment of separate residential schools for blind girls at primary or secondary level wherever required. This is necessary due to social and cultural patterns in this region. Simultaneously with this, blind girls should be allowed and encouraged to educate themselves by all the national Governments of the Asian countries, leading to a stage when education may be made compulsory for them in residential or integrated schools and colleges so that they can develop and grow mentally as normally and naturally as their sighted counterparts and can equip themselves not only for careers but for enlightened motherhood and efficient home-making as well.

#### (c) Institutional Care

Special training and resource centres should be established where blind girls can be trained to lead normal lives without sight and where they can learn domestic science and the arts of home-making and mothercraft. Here mobility training should be given to enable them to move freely, gracefully and independently with the help of a cane. Reading and writing of braille and typing should be taught to ensure communications with the sighted and the blind apart from educational activities. They should be trained in the arts of cooking, sewing, laundry, house-keeping, child-care, entertainment, social and community life with the help of braille and special gadgets which compensate for the lack of sight. This training will help to develop their natural talents towards these jobs so that they can perform them with perfection, speed and efficiency. It should also provide facilities for vocational training and income generating activities towards economic rehabilitation for those who need it in accordance with their individual aptitudes.

In the rural areas a woman is much more active not only at home but in the field where she works side by side with men. Thus she is a great asset to the family and community. According to international information 50% of food is being grown by women in Asia. There is no reason why a blind woman cannot assume this role if she is given the opportunity and training. The training centres established in these areas should therefore include training facilities for agriculture, vegetable gardening, animal husbandry, poultry farming on a small scale and other rural crafts. In villages this training can also be integrated with

the activities of the ordinary community centres there. The above centres should encourage and invite visits from the general public and community to educate them in the abilities of blind women after suitable training so that the age-old distorted and incorrect concept about blindness is gradually removed.

This will raise their value in the marriage market. Marriage is of supreme importance in the social cultural patterns of the East, specially rural communities and is the only way to give purpose and meaning to the life of a woman and the only means through which she can participate fully in family and community life. For most of them in this region their most important and only careers is marriage for which they must be trained to ensure equal efficiency with sighted women and more.

### 5. Research and Publicity

Research projects should be initiated to find ways and means of hastening the social integration of blind women, specially in the developing regions of the world.

Efforts should also be made to find all possible ways and means of removing the discrimination and social prejudices against the marriage of blind women.

Side by side with all this, intense publicity campaigns should be launched through social gatherings, meetings, speeches and mass media via TV, radio and press to change social attitudes towards blind women.

### 6. Conclusion

A vast storehouse of potential lies waiting to be tapped. It is for us to seize the initiative, to make the efforts to draw on it and help it to flow into a merge with the mainstream of modern, liberated active and useful womanhood.

Here I would like to bring to you the knowledge of the eight Resolutions that were passed by the first ever International Conference on the Situation of Blind Women, held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in November 1975 – International Year of Women, under the joint auspices of World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB) and International Federation of the Blind (IFB), a copy of these resolutions is attached to my paper which is being distributed to all of you. I would specially emphasise the importance of Resolution No 8, which is.

**"Exhorts** blind and visually handicapped women to participate actively in the attainment of these

objectives through their organisations of and for the blind.”

Finally I sincerely hope that all of you who have come here from twelve countries of Africa to participate in this Leadership Training Seminar will, on your return home, serve the blind women of your country from the platform of your Association

and will impart to others the knowledge that you have gained here in order to bring progress and development to them. Let us all resolve to implement the recommendations of this Seminar to the utmost, each in her own sphere, to the best of her ability, so that with collective, constant and ceaseless efforts we may hasten the dawn of a new day for the blind women of this region.





Extract taken from "The Situation of Blind Women" by Mrs. Dorina de Gouvea Nowill, Brazil.

### Conclusions

The actual inequality between men and women is generalized in many places and many common problems of women from different parts of the world can be so identified, both in developed and in developing countries.

While women are underprivileged as compared to men in several societies, the situation is much worse in the case of blind women, who are affected by that discrimination plus the "stain" of blindness, which in turn bears a number of stereotypes and prejudice that make their status and participation in the developing process even more limited.

Blind women meet with their first obstacles in life within their own families, when they are prevented from participating in child activities, and for this reason are twice as handicapped, since they are denied the right to experience the usual problems of women.

Such discrimination is particularly strong during their school years, many times for economic reasons, since preference is given to the boy who is going to contribute more in the family budget in the future.

The limited conditions offered to women in general and particularly to blind women, are strengthened by inadequate school programs, lack of educational opportunities, no orientation, no use of their potential skills and a great number of factors that could easily be mentioned. All of them will certainly lead to the development of a poor self-esteem having as results little prospects and belief in their own personal abilities and aspirations.

This discriminating and distorted process is going to be repeated in the professional training programmes, where a blind man is offered more opportunities than a woman, in a vicious circle developed at home and strengthened by society.

As a result of this vicious circle which repeats itself in all fields of activities, we can notice that women are not well prepared, since they do not receive an education that corresponds to their

needs, training, knowledge of their own citizenship and self-confidence to participate in the political life and development of the country in an effective way.

Such factors, added to the social bias that involve blindness, make the cases of blind women who reach directive positions rare, either in private or public entities, although theoretically nothing prevents them from doing so.

In order to change this picture, it is necessary to change the mentality by which women have been seen throughout history, and such change has been occurring in a very slow and hard way. Since half of mankind is made up of women they must be included in equality patterns, which will open new doors for work, economy, sciences, politics, culture and human quality.

A woman will only perform her real role in life when she becomes fully aware of her rights and duties, and when she knows how to share her responsibility in equal conditions with a man.

As to blind women, besides receiving the whole impact of this situation which affects women in general, they also suffer the special limitations and discriminations imposed by blindness itself. This makes a more effective standing necessary in order to carry out programmes to clarify what is generally known about the abilities and limitations of blind women, thus providing actual opportunities for the education of blind women, children and adolescents, in such a way as to integrate them in adequate vocational and professional guidance programmes oriented to their effective performance in all areas of human activity.

In short, one may conclude that:

- most countries do not know the number of their blind women nor their distribution in rural and urban areas. This makes it more difficult for the planning and developing of programmes directed to the real needs of blind women,
- the status of the "blind woman" is not very different from the status of the "woman, in general". There are more limitations due to blindness itself and to the social prejudice prevailing against her,
- in almost every country women are protected by law, but their legal status does not correspond to the actual one.

Therefore equality of rights for men and women is not **effectively granted** to women.

- The status of blind women is better in urban areas than in rural areas, particularly when it concerns education, rehabilitation and work.
- It is necessary to change the blind woman's idea about herself so that **she** can change the environment in the future.
- The situation of the woman, in general, and consequently that of the blind woman is closely

related to the social, economic and cultural backgrounds of the country where she lives in view of its values, habits and traditions.

- One of the most serious obstacles preventing the participation and integration of blind women is the fact that the great majority of them have not yet taken on their duties as citizens, which is an essential condition for any proposals or claims to be successful.



Extract taken from "The Status of Blind Women at Organisations of and for the Blind, and how to improve it" by Mrs. Dorina de Gouvea Nowill, Brazil.

## Conclusions

This study was partly impaired by the very small sampling (29.54% of the total number of questionnaires sent). Nevertheless, it enabled us to perform an analysis of the situation of blind women within the organizations of and/or for the blind, as well as to come to some conclusions, draw some hypotheses and leave the matter open to reflection.

After the analysis of the results obtained through the questionnaires, the following conclusions were drawn:

- There is a very small, hardly significant, percentage of blind women working in organizations of and/or for the blind (12.96% of the total number of women);
- In most of those organizations there is no correspondence between the professional qualification and positions filled by blind women, such positions being nearly always below the professional capability of the women;
- In only one of those 13 organizations does a blind women occupy an executive position (president);
- There was no indication of any blind women filling a directive position in the administration of such organizations;
- Eight (61.53%) of the thirteen organizations mentioned blind women who have been outstanding in their countries, either creating or developing services in the fields of prevention, education and rehabilitation. It is therefore quite clear that whenever they are given an opportunity, or whenever they are aware of their possibilities, blind women are just as capable of being outstanding in their fields as seeing women.

We will now present an analysis of two questions pertaining to a survey (39 countries involved)

previously carried out by us which, since it is directly related to this paper, we deemed worthy of mention:

1. Are women qualified to perform administrative (directive) duties in organizations of and/or for the blind?

Yes – 37 countries (94.87%)

No – 2 countries (5.13%)

No answer – 0

2. Are blind women qualified to perform administrative (directive) duties in organizations of and/or for the blind?

Yes – 37 countries (94.87%)

No – 2 countries (5.13%)

No answer – 0

The analysis of these two sets of answers makes it clear that blind women **have a right** to perform directive duties in the same proportion enjoyed by seeing women. According to the results obtained in the present survey, however, it is evident that this is not **in fact** the case.

In view of these conclusions, we have reason to be concerned with the situation presented in this paper, as it depicts what is taking place with respect to blind women in organizations of and/or for the blind, which have the calling to render services to blind people. Hypotheses were then drawn and a few points left open for reflection and, if possible, for further research in greater depth.

H<sub>1</sub> – Are the organizations of and/or for the blind themselves serving as agents of discrimination towards blind women, thus reflecting society's prejudiced attitudes?

H<sub>2</sub> – Are blind women themselves, due to their lack of preparations or lack of awareness of their rights, etc, the major factor for their not yet having assumed their roles within those organizations?

Since we have no concrete answers to these hypotheses, there will remain a few points for reflection:

1. Would the courage to carry out a critical analysis of this situation and attempt to change it not be up to the organizations of and/or for the blind?

2. How could blind women be prepared for full integration<sup>1</sup> and participation in society?
3. How could these women assume their **rightful** as well as **factual** roles in those organizations?

Here are some suggestions and guidelines aiming at the integration and participation of blind women in society and, consequently, the improvement of their situation in organizations of and/or for the blind.

- Informative programs for the public, through all media available, publicizing the capabilities and limitations of blind people in terms which are compatible with human dignity.
- Enlightenment of "key people" within the organizations of and/or for the blind in the actual possibilities and limitations of blind women in the performance of duties which are compatible with their professional background.
- Preparation of blind women through education<sup>2</sup>.
- Rehabilitation and professional training programs, particularly for women who have recently lost their eyesight and/or those who did not have any educational opportunities, making

them capable of filling a working or administrative position of leadership within their organizations.

- The responsibility that prepared and enlightened blind women have to impart their knowledge to those who did not have the same opportunities.
- The responsibility that blind women have before their communities, to enlighten them and make their presence felt through actual participation, opening the way to new fields of action with future opportunities for the younger generations.
- Integration of blind women in all movements of social change and their active participation in women's organizations.
- The active participation of blind women in work with governmental and private committees dealing with the problems of women as regards their welfare.
- Active participation in work with national and international agencies with respect to the inclusion of assistance to blind women in their programs.

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1) Integration stems from one's capability of both adjusting to society and transforming it with freedom of option. Criticalness is fundamental in integration. One's integration in society implies **not only being in it but also with it** and does not consist of mere adaption, conformity or adjustment. An integrated person is an "active process, whereas conformity is passive.

2) Education for decision making as well as for social and political responsibility. Education for making human beings ever more conscious of their right to participating, causing them to take a new stance in the fact of their problems, their time and their space. Education must, above all, be a constant attempt at changing attitudes (one's own and those of others).







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T682 TRAINING SEMINAR FOR  
BLIND WOMEN LEADERS IN AFRICA HELD  
IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA 3-21  
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Date Due (1982)

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